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CORRESPONDENCE.

SIRS:—A passage in the letter of Mr. Horace Howard Furness, published by Dr. Bright, in the last number of the MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES, has occasioned considerable surprise in competent circles, particularly as coming from such a source. I am referring to lines 26-34 on page 218. Inasmuch as this passage touches the respective merits of the English and German literatures, I am convinced that there is no reader of the NOTES who has not already formed his own estimate of the value of Mr. Furness' singular remark. But the passage in question is not purely critical; it seems to have reference to the popular opinion prevailing in Germany with regard to the native literature, and as such, is apt to mislead the large number of those who have never lived among the Germans in their own country. I should therefore be obliged if you would insert in the next issue of the NOTES the following remarks which, I am confident, will be of interest to a large portion of your readers.

Mr. Furness says "other nations are turning to English literature as to *the* literature of the modern world." This is decidedly incorrect as far as the Germans are concerned. Shakespeare's works, made accessible to everybody by the excellent translation of Schlegel and Tieck, are certainly household books in Germany, and Scott, Byron, Longfellow and Tennyson are familiar to every educated German; but Goethe and Schiller are valued more highly than any of them. The Germans are proud of their literature and would never think of subordinating it, as a whole, to that of any other country. As a dramatist, Shakespeare is generally acknowledged to be superior to either Goethe or Schiller; as a lyricist, the reverse is the case and this point will hardly be contested, even by the most ardent admirers of the great English poet.

Furthermore: "The Germans... are forced to poach on our manor and hunt abroad because they have no such game at home."... Apart from the objectionable form of this proposition, Mr. Furness might have considerable difficulty in proving the contents of it, if he was called upon to do so. Perhaps Mr. Furness was thinking of the *revival* (it was

not the *beginning*, as he has it) of literary life in Germany "a hundred and fifty years ago." German literature is deeply indebted to Shakespeare and Milton and to some extent also to Richardson and Young, Fielding, Sterne and others for the powerful and prevailingly wholesome influence their works have exercised on the German poets of the eighteenth century; but there is a difference between adopting a new principle, because it is better than the old one, and "poaching." According to Mr. Furness, Chaucer was a poacher because he imitated French and Italian models; Shakespeare was a poacher because in writing his plays he made free use of Plautus, of Ariosto, Belleforest and others.

But Mr. Furness is referring to the present time, at least to the nineteenth century. Here his mistake is still more obvious. Ever since the general fermentation, the "Sturm und Drang" of the eighteenth century was over, German literature has been independent, has had an individual character of its own; it began in its turn to influence the literature of England, more than it had ever done in former centuries.¹ Witness the poets of the Lake School, principally Coleridge. Byron admired the genius of Goethe and dedicated to him his "Werner;" Walter Scott, Coleridge, Carlyle and others did not disdain to translate, themselves, parts of Goethe's and Schiller's works into English.

Mr. Furness continues "and so they have societies and magazines devoted to the study of English." This statement is too vague to be intelligible. Perhaps Mr. Furness was thinking of the German Shakespeare Society. But there is a Goethe Society as well. By the "magazines" he meant perhaps the annual reports of that body. But however this may be, to infer from the existence of such "societies and magazines" that the Germans turn to English literature as to *the* literature of the modern world," and that "they are forced to

¹A very opportune sketch of the literary relations existing between England and Germany long before "the beginning of literary life in Germany a hundred and fifty years ago" has since been furnished by Prof. Thomas in his review of Herford's excellent work, p. 291 of the first volume of this journal. As a comment upon Mr. Furness' views, it is none the less striking for being unintentional.

poach and hunt abroad," etc. etc. is, to say the least, singular logic. The same applies to the remark concerning France. The fact that the French are editing Shakespearean plays for schools, proves nothing at all; any teacher knows that there are dozens of English school editions of German and French plays, sometimes six or eight of one and the same piece, as for instance of Minna von Barnhelm. As to the opinion the French have of English literature, they are the last nation on earth to acknowledge it to be superior to their own.

It is to be deeply regretted that statements so entirely at variance with the facts should be made by a man whom Dr. Bright calls "an English scholar of high distinction"—all the more so because, clad in the language which Mr. Furness has seen fit to use and which is anything but that of dispassionate literary criticism, they cannot fail to produce an unfavorable impression both in our own country and abroad, principally and most justly so in Germany.

HUGO SCHILLING.

Wittenberg College.

It must be borne in mind that Mr. Furness' letter, though made public by the press, was clearly never designed for the columns of a scientific journal. Its generally interesting character, however, as embodying an earnest appeal to the authorities of High Schools to have wise regard to the "general awakening to the resources of English, in which our colleges here at home are sharing," was thought to warrant a wider circulation among the specially educational public than could be expected under the conditions of its original appearance. This letter was therefore given to the readers of this journal for the purpose of showing the deep interest which the great Shakespearean scholar has manifested in the lower forms of instruction in language. As it was hoped, the letter was found to be suggestive in many ways, and Dr. Schilling is one of a number who at once expressed a desire to give expression to thoughts relating to one and another portion of it. Dr. Schilling has given us an interesting letter in which, while justly correcting Mr. Furness at points where more careful statements were required, he has however, as it seems to me, taken the general tenor of Mr. Furness' words in a too serious mood. To which nation "the literature of the modern world" is to be accredited, is by pardonable partiality excluded from the domain of profitable discussion; but to the

playful obliquities of Mr. Furness respecting the age of the "literary life" of Germany, it is well enough, perhaps, to check the smile before it become misleading.

J. W. BRIGHT.

A PROPOSED MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION IN CANADA.

In the last number of the NOTES, one of our contributors gave an interesting account of the establishment of a Modern Language Association in Germany. It is with special pleasure that we are able to call attention to the preliminary steps taken for founding a second Society of the kind on this side of the Atlantic. Our Canadian friends have taken hold of the subject with spirit, as the following program, sent us by the Secretary, Prof. J. Squair, of University College, Toronto, abundantly shows. It is an evidence of the activity prevailing in this department of learning in Canada and of the strong desire to have unity of action among those whose interests lie in this field.

With so admirable a system of practical modern language instruction as exists in the Secondary schools of Ontario, her professors and teachers may expect to move forward with good results now that they are about to unite their forces in the struggle toward higher scientific work. We would, therefore, congratulate them on this important step and wish them all possible success. The program reads as follows:

At an informal meeting of persons interested in the study and teaching of Modern Languages (including English), held during the Session of the Ontario Teachers' Association in August last, it was decided to endeavor to form a Modern Language Association for the Province of Ontario, and I was appointed Provisional Secretary, with instructions to make arrangements for a meeting at an early date. * * * * I have been advised by Modern Language men with whom I have conferred to arrange for a meeting, to be held on Wednesday, the 29th of December next, in University College Y. M. C. A. Buildings, at which the following programme will be presented:

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29TH.

11 a.m.—Appointment of Committee to draft Constitution.